

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 5 October 2018****Feedback from College Deans of Learning & Teaching/College Boards of Studies on the Revised Programme & Course Approval Processes****Ms H Clegg, Senate Office****Introduction**

In the 2015-16 academic year, revisions were made to the programme and course approval processes, to allow Schools to approve course approvals, and Colleges to approve programme changes. The processes were further revised in 2016-17 to extend College approval responsibility to new programmes.

In line with previous years' practice, College Deans of Learning & Teaching were invited to comment, on behalf of their College, on the operation of the revised processes, indicating what had worked well and what might need further consideration.

Summary of Feedback Received**College of Arts**

The College had held a review of Board of Study processes in Arts in June 2018, which encompassed UG and PGT, and School and College-level processes). A small number of UG programme proposals had been submitted, with PGT proposals being more common. Some deficiencies had been noted that should have been detected at School level. The College noted that it had little visibility of course approvals. Although the College audits these, this exercise raised concern about the opportunity for error. This was not put forward as a criticism of colleagues involved, but the College noted it was dealing with very complex forms and processes, which change frequently and sometimes subtly, with relatively little training and support, and guidance that was sometimes vague. In particular, it was stated that the centrally-provided guidance on when consultation is and is not required was too vague and required clarification.

As a result of the College review, it was planned to align UG and PGT processes more. While it was recognised that some differences would remain and were useful, other inconsistencies were noted which were not necessarily helpful in terms of encouraging engagement with the processes from colleagues who were not heavily and frequently involved in proposals and approvals.

The College had experienced difficulty in identifying cognate external members, particularly for College-level boards, now that PAGs did not exist. It had also experienced some difficulties regarding the alignment of deadlines, but was addressing this.

The Dean agreed with the point made by the College of Social Sciences regarding the forms being seen as a bureaucratic activity instead of the output of a design process.

College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences

The College reported that the Board of Studies had had a relatively quiet year. Most proposals were for courses and were dealt with at School level. The College had little oversight of these other than through the auditing process but they appeared to have been relatively straightforward. There had been only a small number of programme proposals, most of which had been handled by email. It was reported that some programme change proposals had been submitted late, and that further efforts would be made to emphasise the deadlines in future sessions.

Further information was provided by the School of Veterinary Medicine, who reported the process had worked well from its point of view. It was happy with the ability of Schools to approve course proposals, as this meant approval could be obtained at short notice. It also noted that the programme proposal process was now more straightforward. It highlighted the need for training – it was noted that the School was in a favourable position by having the ASC Convener within the School but recognised that this would not be the case elsewhere. It also left the School vulnerable should the Convener step down at some point.

College of Science & Engineering

The College view was that Schools could perform much better scrutiny before the proposals were forwarded to College. Considerable effort had been required by the College to resolve major issues with proposals in the time between submission to College and the meeting of the Board of Studies. It was felt that the College was often having to ask questions that the Schools should have asked. The College was asked for advice at the design stage in a few cases and it felt that it would have been helpful if all proposers had done this. One programme was submitted very late and the delay did not appear to have been necessary.

Regarding course approval, the College noted it now had such little visibility that it was difficult to comment.

The College had run a training event for Conveners and Administrators in November 2017. It was not yet evident that the quality and timeliness of proposals had improved as a result.

College of Social Sciences

Regarding course approval, it was noted that administrators edited many proposals, with course proposers seeing the PIP form as a bureaucratic activity instead of the output of a design process, and with scrutiny being more focused on the wording, presentation and accuracy of the documentation, than of the learning, teaching and assessment being proposed. There seemed to be little awareness that the course proposal document once approved, is the University's 'contract' and of interest to the CMA. It was not clear that the kind of academic discussion about programmes, courses and the alignment of courses and programmes was being fully captured in the process. While this comment was a critique of the decision making that should take place before inputting to PIP, rather than the course approval process per se, it was noted that course approval and course design were seen by many as one and the same thing and with this now being located solely at School level, the Dean had no real overview.

Regarding programme design, there was limited awareness of the process for designing new programmes, with there being instead a heavy reliance on College administrative teams for guidance. It was suggested that Deans might consider how course and programme design was understood within the Colleges so that the PIP activity was the end point and not a mid or start point. In terms of the relationship between course and programme levels, it would be helpful to encourage thought as to how new courses fit with the programme ILOs and the overall programme assessment because there seemed to be no means of determining whether consideration has been given to how a course fits in with the programme and with other courses on the programme beyond pre-requisites.

It was noted that the College had consolidated the previous four UG Schools/Programmes Boards of Studies into one College UG Programmes Board of Studies from this session onwards.

The Dean reported that one of the initiatives that the Assessment & Feedback Working Group intended to introduce was an annual session for all School L&T Committee chairs, scrutineers of course proposals and examinations officers, to help them intelligently scrutinise course proposals, make recommendations about assessment, etc.

Senate Office Actions:

1. Clarify centrally-provided guidance, particularly in relation to consultation requirements.
2. Improve awareness of guidance for designing and proposing new programmes.